



News Release

Office of the Louisiana State Fire Marshal
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Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70806

VISIT OUR WEBSITE: "www.dps.state.la.us/sfm/

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*PHOTOS available in ".jpg" format. If interested, e-mail: mreech@dps.state.la.us



Photo 1

Photo 1: "Raising the Roof"- St. Tammany HBA Home sprinklers to be installed in St. Tammany home that is to be raffled to benefit St. Tammany charities



Photo 2

Photo 2: Mr. Bella addressing the St. Tammany Home Builders Association and Purchasing the first raffle ticket

LAWN SPRINKLERS SAVE YOUR GRASS; FIRE SPRINKLERS SAVE YOUR A**

State Fire Marshal Promotes Residential Sprinklers

BATON ROUGE – That's what the bumper stickers say. State Fire Marshal V. J. Bella, who conceived the slogan as well as the bumper stickers, has had a lifelong ambition to reduce the number of fire deaths and injuries that occur each year, particularly those that take place in the home. "The huge majority of fire deaths that occur in this country happen in the home", said Mr. Bella. "Residential sprinklers are a relatively inexpensive way to reduce these deaths. People in our state spend considerable money installing sprinklers in their yards to save the grass. I'm suggesting that they consider installing sprinklers in their homes to save their lives."

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Mr. Bella has been addressing this theme to groups all over the state for many months. "Now we finally got a break," said Mr. Bella. The St. Tammany Home Builders Association has been raffling a house every year since 1994, with the proceeds of over \$1.5 million being distributed to local charities. This years house will have residential sprinklers. Local businesses and contractors donate cash, materials and labor to the construction of the home. Mr. Bella was instrumental in gaining the cooperation and donations of Baton Rouge sprinkler contractor Kent Berthelot of Brassco Inc., who will provide the labor and materials for the home's sprinkler system, and Mr. Henry Arceneaux, President of Miracle Vent, Inc., manufacturer of the "Miracle Vent", a device designed to prevent freeze damage to the sprinkler piping, and to vent accumulated smoke from the home.

"Thanks to the generous contributions of these two gentlemen and their companies, a dream I've had for a long time is beginning to come true", said Mr. Bella. "I am not saying that sprinklers in the home should be mandatory. All I am saying is that home sprinklers should be offered to the homebuyer as an OPTION; one that could save their lives." Homes today are being offered with all of the modern conveniences: sensors that turn on floodlights and start appliances automatically, pre-wired home theatre and computer networks, lights controlled by timers, sensors, or a voice recognition program, video screens that allow communication between people in different rooms, and showers that can be programmed to come on at a preset time or temperature. "One option being offered today allows voice commands or a single switch to be programmed to initiate a 'Romance setting,' which will dim the lights, pull the shades, and start the gas fireplace and stereo. I'm a romantic guy, but I'm also practical. The consumer should have the OPTION of having the added protection of home sprinklers when they are purchasing a 'site built' home, and those that are building their own homes should seriously consider the installation of residential sprinklers" said Mr. Bella.

Residential sprinklers could easily result in substantially reduced homeowner insurance rates. "The peace of mind afforded by residential sprinklers is priceless, but in a practical vein, residential sprinklers will result in lower homeowner insurance rates. That's an unbeatable combination." It should also be noted that residential sprinkler systems can be retrofit into existing homes. The Office of the State Fire Marshal licenses and regulates sprinkler contractors in the state of Louisiana, therefore cannot offer recommendations or referrals. A list of Licensed sprinkler contractors may be obtained from the State Fire Marshal Licensing Section at 1-800-256-5452. Local licensed sprinkler contractors may be found in the Yellow Pages under under "Sprinklers" or "Sprinklers, Automatic, Fire".

INFORMATION REGARDING THE ST. TAMMANY HOME BUILDERS ASSOC. "RAISING THE ROOF FOR CHARITY" 2001 EVENT:

The ticket sale for this event began January 11, 2001. Only 5,000 tickets will be available at \$100 each, and may be ordered from the Slidell Memorial Hospice Foundation at 1-877-726-9099 or the St. Tammany Home Builders Association at 1-800-715-1387. For more information or to arrange an interview, contact John Schroder at 504-892-5649.

Photo 1 (left to right):

Tim Fandal, STHBA
Henry Arceneaux, President Miracle Vent, Inc.
V. J. Bella, State Fire Marshal
Kent Berthelot, Brassco Inc.
Floyd Glass, St. Tammany District Councilman
Mike Strain, State Representative
Tom Schedler, State Senator
Kevin Davis, St. Tammany Parish President
Linden Raimer, St. Tammany Parish Building Official
John Schroder, STHBA Raffle Chairman